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'The gloves are off' on ABLA, say rankled locals

LYDIALYLE GIBSON
Staff Writer

After four years of planning, developer's abrupt zoning change has neighborhood group 'floobergasted'

than a few weeks now, as been brewing on the east Side. A low rumbling sessions and presentations both formal and le developers firmed up d for transforming 100 A public housing into a community. the clouds opened up. the day officials at LR the firm charged with

handling ABLA's rise from the bulldozed dust of run-down rowhouses and walk-ups, submitted their proposal for the project. Among the bundle of papers was an application asking City Council members to change ABLA's zoning from largely residential to a more open classification allowing all manner of commercial development

from day-care centers to broadcast towers.

University Village Association leaders leapt on LR's plans before the day was out. With visions of fast-food drive-throughs and cell phone towers dancing in their heads, they took their case to city officials, professing astonishment, worry, outrage.

"The gloves are off," said UVA executive director Chris Provenzano, who found himself fielding frantic calls and manning an overworked fax machine through the weekend. On Monday, he began haranguing local pols.

"B4-2 zoning allows anything," said John Chandler, a UVA board member and chair of its ABLA committee. Chandler is also vice president of finance at St. Ignatius College Prep, nestled alongside ABLA's campus at Roosevelt and Blue Island.

"Our concern is that when you have
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Ikea talk drives traffic concerns

Swedish furniture dealer, other retailers, and a few thousand residents may end up at South Loop property

By LYDIALYLE GIBSON
Staff Writer

The South Loop's Loftopolis is the verge of a growth spurt. At more than a year at the drawing table, developers last week polished off plans for transforming 62 acres of wilderness and rail yards at the southwest corner of Clark and Roosevelt into 5,000 homes and 600,000 square feet of retail space.

According to a proposal submitted to City Hall by Rezmar Corp. executives, the project would make room for restaurants, offices, taverns, day-care centers, dance clubs, and stores. Not least among the candidates clamoring for a storefront is Swedish home furnishings giant Ikea. With one thriving location luring swarms of shoppers in Schaumburg, Ikea officials have hankered for a Chicago location.

"We are looking for one or two large retail users," said Rezmar spokeswoman Judi Fishman. "We're talking to several retailers. Ikea is one of them."

Also last week, executives at Home Depot lodged an application to build a store on Roosevelt Road just west of the South Branch. And Target officials hope to have a location of their own underway soon at the northwest corner of Clark and Roosevelt, as part of a development called LaSalle Park.

For Mike Kelly, president of Historic Printers' Row Neighbors, the big boxes are starting to stack pretty high.

"Everyone's looking at these projects individually, but you have to look at them in total, too," Kelly said. "The number one concern we've heard is traffic, congestion. How are they going to create access?"

Pete Scales, a spokesman for the Department of Planning and Development, said he couldn't comment on Rezmar's proposed development, which is under review by city officials.

But Kelly said he's not altogether sold on the idea of an Ikea just across Clark, although he's ready to hear more.

"Again, traffic is the biggest piece," Kelly said. "It doesn't necessarily seem that a retailer that was rejected from other parcels in the city would for some reason go here. Why is it on this site and
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Finding prosperity to be a double-edged sword, Columbia College administrators work to maintain a balance between school growth and multiculturalism



Photo by Josh Hawkins

om and film-and-video major at Columbia College, Annamarie Fiducci struggles to keep her finances afloat as a full-time student.

Dance of diversity

By LYDIALYLE GIBSON
Staff Writer

namarie Fiducci is a single mom with vo vigorous boys at home and more student loans than she cares to count. A college dropout who earned a decade's living TVs and VCRs until technology caught er, Fiducci is now eking her way college on a web of scholarships and when she's not in class, she's working on

campus, and when she's not working, she's at home cooking supper and helping the kids with their homework. And dreaming of a career as an animator for Disney or Pixar or Dreamworks. Maybe a life in Florida or Southern California.

Fiducci is just the kind of student Columbia College administrators like to see: creative, tenacious, ambitious—and strapped for cash. If Fiducci weren't at Columbia College, where tuition's relatively cheap and government money traditionally easy to come by, she might not be in

college at all. But along with many others like her, Fiducci, who will be a senior this fall, is finding ends harder and harder to meet. Recently Columbia College's tuition has been climbing—albeit more slowly than elsewhere—and state and federal funds are drying up.

"It's almost impossible," Fiducci said. "I mean, one of the main things that keeps me going is that my boys and I are on public aid. We've got food stamps coming in. I'm going to have \$10,000 in stu-

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student body reflects the economic, racial, and cultural diversity of life today."

But as the school grows, gobbling parcel after parcel in the South Loop and adding new academic programs—and professors—every fall, Columbia College administrators and their students are having to readjust.

"Right now, there are real economic pressures on our student body that are a little scary," Kelly said. "The federal and

The federal and Columbia College's second boardinghouse, alone will raise expenses campuswide for Columbia.

"It will place more demand on our resources," Kapelke said. "Right now, almost all of our buildings are closed on Sundays. But with 15 percent of students on campus, they'll want, not 24-hour, but increased access to classrooms and lounges and computer labs."

Likewise, Columbia College

health care costs, maintenance, the list goes on and on. There's strong competition these days for pay for staff and faculty members."

But at just under \$15,000, Columbia College's annual tuition falls well below that of other arts schools, Kelly said.

"Which is not to say that our tuition doesn't seem exorbitant to someone with little means," he added. "But I think we've been very conscientious."

The problem is that property in the South Loop is becoming more expensive, and largely because of our presence. It's kind of an ironic thing. But we need to make certain that we reach as many students as we can possibly reach, and that we make it possible for them to go here."

The way to do that, according to both Kelly and Kapelke, is by digging deep and excavating

Ikea, condos may fill South Loop site

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not those others? I don't quite see how it will be incorporated. Our expectation is that the details will be presented to demonstrate to the community that it's not just going to be congestion."

Elsewhere in Rezmar's proposal, Kelly said he sees neighborhood wishes clearly reflected. Calling the project Riverside Park, Rezmar officials aim to erect a few high-rises—some perhaps as high as 50 stories, mostly toward the site's northward edge—but mostly they'll build shorter. Town houses, loft buildings, mid-rise towers. Parkland along the river's edge will be open to the public, with bike trails and hiking paths."

"We're working with Friends of the River on the design of the

river walk," Fishman said. "We'd like to integrate this development as much as possible into the South Loop."

Right now covered in woods and weeds, Rezmar's property—bounded by Roosevelt, Clark, the Chicago River, and 16th—lacks roads, sewers, electricity. Fishman said she and her colleagues plan to revive much of the city's street grid, and they'll extend Wells Street the length of the project.

"There'll be multiple ways of getting in and out of the site," Fishman said, adding that Rezmar officials will hold a neighborhood meeting or two this fall to make their case before the locals.

"We're already starting to schedule them," she said.

"It's consistent with the com-

ments that the community put forward," Kelly said. "The mixed use of high-rise and mid-rise and low-rise buildings, the grid pattern of the street—everything is consistent at a very high, large-scale level. We hope the details will be forthcoming. We're very encouraged that the site will be developed with input from the community. Now the question is moving into implementation. ... We're very enthusiastic that this site will be developed. It's been vacant for a long time."

That's a sentiment that Near South Planning Board Executive Director Bonnie Sanchez-Carlson seconded.

"I'm pleased that something will be developed on that site," Sanchez-Carlson said. "It's been vacant for awhile. I've been here

13 years, and it's been empty the whole time."

Sanchez-Carlson said, too, that the prospect of bumper-to-bumper traffic on Roosevelt and Clark worried her most.

"We want to make sure there are other roadways, that it's not just focusing on Roosevelt," she said. "The problem with it being bounded by the railroad tracks and the river is that it's a difficult piece to put together."

In part aiming to ease the congestion that Rezmar's development might generate, officials at the city's Department of Transportation announced plans earlier this year to burrow a new path for a subterranean—and swift-moving Clark Street—beneath Roosevelt Road.

"That in and of itself relieves the traffic," Fishman said.

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